

SHAPING 4J's FUTURE

Strategic Planning Process

for the Eugene School District

Trends & Issues Report

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- **Key Enrollment & Demographic Trends**
- **Options Identified by the Eight Focus Groups**
- **General Themes**



Eugene School District 4J
Eugene, Oregon
January 18, 2007

SHAPING 4J'S FUTURE
A Strategic Planning Process for the Eugene School District

Trends and Issues Report

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Purpose and Process for the Strategic Planning Process: Shaping 4J's Future

Purpose

The Eugene School District has undertaken a strategic planning process (Shaping 4J's Future) to determine what the district should look like over the next decade. The process is focused on several unanswered questions about how and where the district will provide instructional programs to best serve its students given declining enrollment and changing student demographics and needs.

This is the key strategic question: "What services and facilities will be needed to support the district's future instructional programs in order to increase the achievement for all students and close the achievement gap?" In answering this question, the school district board will be taking into consideration declining enrollment, regional enrollment patterns, placement of special education programs, the location of alternative schools, and potential strategies such as boundary changes, grade and school configurations, and school closures and/or expansions.

This process will build upon and is not intended to replace ongoing instructional planning. The district's instructional goals and guiding principals continue to be increasing achievement for all students, closing the achievement gap, and providing equal opportunities for all students to succeed.

Process

Figure 1 outlines the strategic planning process in detail. In summary, there are four steps in the process.

Identify Trends and Issues (Phase 1): This phase of the process is nearly complete.

The district has gathered enrollment and demographic trends. A report entitled "Enrollment and Demographic Trends" is included in a separate document, the Focus Group Resource Guide. The report is summarized in the section of this report entitled, "Key Enrollment and Demographic Trends," which begins on page 4.

The district has summarized instructional research in a number of key areas (Special Education, Title I, English Language Learners, Pre-Kindergarten and Full Day Kindergartens, School Size, Technology, and Grade Configuration). These summaries are also included in the Focus Group Resource Guide.

District staff has visited each school, met with the principal, and issued a report called, "Classroom Utilization." The report, which is included in the Focus Group Resource Guide, provides building capacity information as it is related to providing instruction. The findings are summarized in the section of this report entitled, "Building Capacity" (Page 6).

SHAPING 4J's FUTURE

Strategic Planning Process for the Eugene School District

Identify Trends & Issues

Phase 1

August 2006 – February 2007

Assess the trends & instructional issues that will affect school facilities, program location & resource needs in the future.

Product: Trends and Issues Report

School Board: Review report & provide direction for Phase II

Activities

Gather Data

Enrollment trends, school building capacity, staff turnover, etc.

Analyze Instructional Issues

- Best practice research
- Focus groups
- Staff identify options & priorities for addressing a specific issue

Collect Feedback on Draft Report

Publish draft report & collect feedback via the 4J website

Develop Possibilities for the Future

Phase 2

February – June 2007

Describe different alternatives for the district's future that respond to the issues that emerged in Phase 1.

Product: Report Describing Future Possibilities

School Board: Review report & provide direction for Phase III

Activities

Develop Alternatives

Integrate instructional options & priorities that emerged in Phase 1 into alternative directions for the future

Analyze Feasibility of Future Alternatives

Assess costs, impacts & feasibility of the alternatives

Collect Feedback on Draft Report

Publish draft report & collect feedback via the 4J web site

Assess Community Preferences for Future Possibilities

Phase 3

Fall 2007

Present the possibilities to our community & get input on community preferences.

Product: Report to School Board

Activities

Public involvement

Activities will be planned in summer 2007, with direction from the School Board

Present Superintendent Recommendations

February 2008

Adopt School Board Action

Spring 2008

October 2006

Finally, the district contracted with Marilyn Clotz and David Piercy to conduct eight weeklong focus groups to address unanswered questions that will have an impact on school size, grade configurations, programs, and the location of schools. The Focus Group Resource Guide describes the focus group process in detail.

The eight focus groups met during the week of November 13, 2006, and were asked to identify options for answering the questions identified below. The options and their implications are summarized in the sections of this report entitled, “A Summary of the Options Identified During the November Focus Group Process,” (Page 6) and “Conclusions and Major Themes” (Page 34). The focus groups also identified a number of additional questions and issues for consideration by the Board and Think Tank (Page 28).

- (1) **Special Education:** What is the right model for special education in 4J? What are the implications?
- (2) **Title 1:** What is the right model for Title 1 in 4J? What are the implications?
- (3) **English Language Learners:** What is the right model for ELL in 4J? What are the implications?
- (4) **Pre-Kindergarten and Full Day Kindergartens:** Are 4J elementary schools going to house and support full day kindergartens and/or pre-Kindergarten programs? What are the implications?
- (5) **High School Size:** What size high schools, including alternative schools, is 4J willing to accommodate? What are the implications?
- (6) **Elementary and Middle School Size:** What size elementary and middle schools, including alternative schools, is 4J willing to accommodate?
- (7) **Technology:** How will technology support 4J operations and instruction (regular instruction and such programs as special education and ELL)? What are the implications?
- (8) **Grade Configurations:** Should 4J consider implementing alternative grade configurations (e.g., K-8 or primary schools), and, if so, which ones? What are the implications?

This status report will be presented to the board at its February 26, 2006, meeting after the district has received staff and public feedback through the 4J website.

Develop Possibilities for the Future (Phase 2)

The district has contracted with the University of Oregon’s Department of Planning, Public Policy, and Management to convene a Think Tank. The Think Tank will explore the information from the focus groups, develop a set of integrated options or scenarios for consideration by the School Board, and offer a preliminary assessment of their likely public acceptance. The Think Tank will not be making recommendations, but will help review and package information from the focus groups for Board review and a more public consultation process.

The Think Tank membership will be community people who have a broad interest in the community and who have a cross section of perspectives.

The Think Tank process will be completed by August and a report will go to the School Board.

Assess Community Preferences for Future Possibilities (Phase 3)

Following the Think Tank process the School Board will determine the process for presenting the possibilities to the community and getting input on community preferences. The district has also contracted with the University of Oregon's Department of Planning, Public Policy, and Management to conduct this phase, which will occur in the Fall of 2007.

Present Superintendent Recommendations and Adopt Action Plan

In the winter and spring of 2008 the superintendent will make recommendations for action to the School Board who will adopt an Action Plan.

Key Enrollment and Demographic Trends

A report, "Shaping 4J's Future: Enrollment and Demographic Trends," is included in the Focus Group Resource Guide. Information about enrollment and student characteristics is critical to planning the district's services and facilities. The key trends identified in the report are summarized below:

Student Enrollment

1. This school year (2006-07) student enrollment is at a 20 year low of 17,357. Over the last decade 4J's enrollment has declined by 1, 289 students.
2. If current trends continue, enrollment in 4J schools is expected to decline by another thousand students and stabilize at 16,400 students in 2015.

Enrollment at the elementary level will remain stable with 7,345 students in 2006 and 7,333 students in 2015.

Enrollment at the middle school level will decline by about 150 students from 3,915 in 2006 to 3,778 in 2015.

Enrollment at the high school level will decline by about 830 students from 6,097 this school year to 5,264 in 2015.

3. Enrollment projections vary by region. Assuming the same pattern of student transfers as in 2006:

Enrollment in the Sheldon region is expected to grow by about 250 students.

Enrollment in the Churchill region will decline slightly by about 80 students.

Enrollment in the North region will decline by about 500 students.

Enrollment in the South region will decline by about 660 students.

Student Demographics

4. Student demographics are changing while enrollment declines. If current trends continue:

Minority student population will grow from 21.5% in 2006 to 30.9% in 2015. A higher concentration of these students will be in the North and Churchill regions. The largest increase in the number of minority students have been Latinos in the North region, followed by Asians in the Sheldon region.

The number of students eligible for free and reduced lunches, a common indicator of socio-economic status, will increase from 29.8% in 2006 to 39.7% in 2015. A higher concentration of these students will be in the North and Churchill regions.

The number of students who qualify as English Language Learners will increase by over 100 students from 406 in 2006 to 517 in 2015. (**Note:** The 406 students noted here in 2006 is the actual number of students served while the full Enrollment and Demographic Trends report uses an Oregon Department of Education “full time equivalent” formula to identify the number of students.)

The number of students who receive special education services will increase by nearly 500 students from 2,602 in 2006 to 3,079 in 2015.

Transfers from Neighborhood Schools

5. A large number of students (approximately 32%) do not attend their neighborhood schools. Rather, they use the district’s open enrollment policy to transfer to an alternative school or another neighborhood school. The numbers below show the net number of transfers to and from neighborhood schools in each region in 2006.

Churchill region lost 1,082 students to alternative schools, charter schools and neighborhood schools in other regions;

North region lost 1,142;

Sheldon region lost 489; and

South region gained 253 students.

U.S. Census Information

6. Between 1990 and 2000, the district’s total population increased by approximately 53,000 people, a 43% rise, while the percentage of children between the ages of 5 and 19 declined by 2,570, a 10% decrease.

Of all households in 2000, only 27% have children.

By 2015, the largest age group living within distinct boundaries will likely be over 55. In 2000 it was split between the 20 to 34 and 35 to 54 age ranges.

Building Capacity

One of the goals of this planning process is to ensure that the district makes future decisions about capital improvements, including bond requests, based on the instructional needs of the district.

Just as it is important to understand student demographics when doing long term instructional planning, it is also important to understand what capacity schools have. That is, what schools have extra space and what schools are over-crowded? Most instructional decisions have implications for the use of instructional space and space limitations have implications for the kind of instructional programs the district can offer or the building modifications that will need to be made.

To gather this information a team of central office administrators visited each classroom in the school district and met with building administrators to estimate building capacity. A school-by-school analysis is included in a report called “Classroom Utilization,” which is located in the [Focus Group Resource Guide](#). The estimates were based on current program. Certain program decisions could change the utilization reports. For example, changes in the special education model or moving to full day kindergartens could change estimates on the number of students who can attend a specific school, given current space.

In summary, the classroom utilization reports reveal that elementary schools have an excess capacity of 890 students and middle schools an excess capacity of 1,365 students. High schools, based on current usage, have little excess capacity, according to the report, which may be because the schools have scheduled their programs based on available space.

A Summary of the Options and Issues Identified during the November Focus Group Process

Each of the eight focus groups discussed the implications of the district’s current instructional model, reviewed instructional literature, and identified at least three implementation options based on a range of funding assumptions. First, they assumed that no additional funds would be available, second that some additional funds would be available, and third, that the state legislature would fully fund the Quality Education Model (QEM), or, if the QEM model did not apply to that specific topic, a substantial increase in funds would become available. The focus groups also considered the implications of these options and identified additional questions and issues to forward to the School Board and the Think Tank. All but one of the focus groups identified issues that various stakeholder groups (staff, students, parent, and community) might raise.

The options and issues identified by the focus groups are summarized below. A full copy of each focus group report is attached and must be read to fully understand the options and the implications of implementing those options. Implementation details are also included for many of the options.

Special Education

School districts are required under federal and state law to provide a free appropriate public education for students with disabilities, without regard to the severity of the disability or the cost of the program. The laws enacted by federal and state legislatures and the accompanying administrative rules are complex and there is a great deal of case law that

interprets these statutes and rules. Further, school districts are required to provide instruction and related services for students with disabilities in the least restrictive environment, that is within the context of the general education curriculum and, to the extent possible, in the general education classroom. This instruction must be based on an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) that is developed jointly by school officials and parents. The state and federal governments monitor a school district's compliance with these laws regularly, and if a parent disagrees with a student's placement there is a federally mandated due process procedure that must be followed to resolve the issue.

The federal government has recently established a benchmark or goal that 80% of students with disabilities will participate in the general education classroom 80% of the time with no more than 20% of their time out of the general education classroom. This benchmark provides the context for the special education focus group's implementation options that follow.

Current Program Model

Each school in 4J has a learning center that provides special instruction to most eligible students. In addition, a large number of schools have one or more regional learning centers that are designed to provide services for students who need more intensive services because of their cognitive skills, behavior, or to teach life skills. There are also itinerant staff that provide specialized services (e.g., speech and language services and occupational and physical therapy) and assessment (school psychologists). The district also provides home instruction for some eligible students who have been expelled from school or who have severe behavioral, mental health, or health issues.

Implementation Options

The special education focus group based its implementation options on the following values and beliefs:

- Instruction and services for students with disabilities should be an integrated and collaborative process that involves parents, students, general and special educators, classified staff, and district and community representatives.
- The instructional and social needs of every child should drive instruction and intervention.
- Each child should be given an opportunity to achieve and be held to high standards. Behavior and social skills are important for the overall success of a student.
- Educators need ongoing, supported professional development and time for collaboration and implementation.
- Interventions should allow all students access to grade level curriculum, in the least restrictive environment and special educators should be a resource for both students and staff.

Funding Assumption 1: No additional funds will be available to the district.

Option 1: Replace Learning Centers with General/Special Education Integrated Service Delivery.

Eliminate current programs (i.e., Learning Centers and Regional Learning Centers) and replace them with a service delivery system in which, with appropriate supports, 80% of all students receive at least 80% of their instruction in general education classrooms.

Implement the Instructional Intervention Progress Monitoring (IPT) model in place of the current Student Support Team (SST) model. The IPT model includes (1) the identification of students who are not succeeding in the general education setting, (2) prescribing instructional interventions, (3) checking the effectiveness of interventions with frequent assessment, and (4) adjusting interventions when they are not working.

Use district Integration Specialists to assist schools in meeting the 80% goal.

Expand the current High School Community Living Program, which provides intensive instructional and transition services for eligible high school and post-high school students.

Implications: This needs based model would assist more students not just those who are identified as eligible for special education, increase the number of students who remain in their neighborhood schools, allow for additional academic interventions at the lower grades, meet the federal requirement to provide services as part of the general education curriculum, reduce student transportation, and allow for better coordination with Title 1 and ELL.

On the other hand, students in smaller schools may not get as many services and the program would suffer if adequate support were not provided. The model does not provide for those who need more intensive services, could make it difficult to provide the flexible funding necessary to address changing needs of students, and may not provide the full continuum of services required by law. No funds would be available for necessary staff development. This model could result in the identification of fewer special education students.

Funding Assumption 2: Some additional funds will be available to the district.

Option 2: Replace Learning Centers with General/Special Education Integrated Service Delivery and Add Many Needed In-Building Supports.

Eliminate current programs (i.e., Learning Centers, Regional Learning Centers, and the Intensive Service Program) and replace them with a service delivery system in which, with appropriate supports, 80% of all students receive at least 80% of their instruction in general education classrooms.

Assign a Special Education/Educational Support Services (ESS) support staff person to each school based on students and needs. This specialist will assist with meeting the continuum of student needs.

Implement the Instructional Intervention Progress Monitoring (IPT) model in place of the current Student Support Team (SST) model.

Expand the current High School Community Living and Transition Connections Program, which provide intensive instructional and transition services for eligible high school and post-high school students.

Implications: In addition to the implications identified in Option 1, the increased staffing that comes with this option allows for more building based staff to provide instruction for students who have received services in resource rooms and alternative education placements, early intervention and prevention services, and building based case management. This option allows for a full continuum of services and complies with state and federal mandates. This model could result in the identification of fewer special education students.

Funding Assumption 3: The Quality Education Model is fully funded by the Oregon State Legislature.

Option 3: Establish Schools Without Boundaries Where Services Go Where They Are Needed.

Eliminate the current special education model and instead adopt a general staffing ratio of 20:1, increase the number of instructional assistants, provide integrated special education services at each instructional level, and assign school based specialists and consultants to meet the needs of students.

Implement the Instructional Intervention Progress Monitoring (IPT) model in place of the current Student Support Team (SST) model.

Expand the current High School Community Living and Transition Connections Program, which provide intensive instructional and transition services for eligible high school and post-high school students.

Implications: In addition to the implications associated with Options 1 and 2, this model provides ample professional development time, allows the district to meet the 80% benchmark, and allows special needs students to stay in their neighborhood schools.

On the other hand, this model may not be appropriate to middle or high schools, not be feasible in smaller schools with less funding, and concentrate high need students in certain schools. This model also could result in the identification of fewer special education students. This model may take more than provided for by the Quality Education Model and require reallocation of funds from other programs.

What issues might stakeholder groups raise as they think about special education?

- Staff: Some staff may not want special education students in their classes and may need help learning how to differentiate instruction. They will need time to plan and collaborate and will be concerned about workload. Special educators, both teachers and instructional assistants, may have concerns about redefining their roles.
- Students: General education students will need to be respectful and include kids with special needs while some special education students will need the social and behavioral skills to function successfully and feel comfortable in a general education classroom.
- Parents: Some parents will have concerns about their students associating with an increased number of special education students or the impact it will have on general education classroom instruction, but most special education parents want their children in their neighborhood schools. Some parents, including those who advocate for students with learning disabilities may be concerned that a change in model will reduce the services these students receive.
- Community: Paradigm changes are difficult: changes in teacher education programs may be necessary and an increased number of students with disabilities doing community work will have an impact on the community.

Title 1

Title 1 is a federally funded program with the purpose of ensuring that disadvantaged children have a fair, equal, and significant opportunity to obtain a high quality education and reach, at a minimum, the Oregon academic achievement standards. Title 1 funds can only be used to supplement, not replace, district and school resources. Funds are distributed to school districts and schools based on the number of low income students they have. A local school district has a great deal of autonomy in determining how Title 1 funds are allocated as long as they can demonstrate they are meeting the purpose of the federal act.

Current Program Model

District 4J allocates Title 1 funds to those elementary schools in which at least 43% of its students are eligible for the free and reduced lunch program. Thirteen district elementary schools and two private schools currently participate in the program. Looking Glass also receives funding from the school district. Of the thirteen elementary schools, six are referred to as having a “Title Program for Targeted Assistance.” That is, they provide services only to the highest need students. The other seven operate a “school wide” program, which allows them to assist all their students in meeting benchmarks. Private schools can receive funds for their students who live in a Title 1 school attendance area and are eligible for the free and reduced lunch program. In 4J, Title funds can only be used for services to support students not meeting the benchmarks in reading, writing, and mathematics.

Implementation Options

The Title 1 Focus Group based its implementation options on the following values and beliefs:

- Staff members value every child, believe all children can learn and be successful, and are committed to providing appropriate curriculum and instruction to boost student achievement and self-esteem.
- An effective Title 1 school has clear goals and expectations, appropriate instructional materials, professional development, and ongoing assessment.
- All staff members work collaboratively to provide appropriate instruction to meet student needs.
- Parents play an important role in the education of their children.
- Resources must be targeted and efficiently used.

Funding Assumption 1: No additional funds will be available to the district.

Option 1: Require “school wide” programs at each Title 1 school, target math and language arts instruction to students in grades K-2, and standardize Title 1 curriculum, instruction and assessment.

Require all district Title 1 schools to operate “school-wide” programs whose first priority for spending is to provide comprehensive instruction in math and language arts for students in grades K through 2. Remaining funds can be used, based on student needs assessment, to provide math and language support at other grade levels. Standardize Title 1 curriculum and instruction, assessment, professional development, and parent involvement procedures across the district.

Implications: Standardized programs across the district will help ensure equitable educational opportunities for all students, and comprehensive math and reading instruction for students in grades K through 2 will reduce the likelihood that students will need remediation or special education in the upper grades. This model, however, would reduce the support for students in upper grades who need services.

Funding Assumption 2: Some additional funds will be available to the district.

Option 2: Implement Option 1 and increase staffing for Title 1 coordinators at each eligible school and for the district’s family resource center, increase extended learning opportunities, focus on instructional improvement, and make other improvements.

Implement Option 1 and add resources to increase staffing for Title 1 coordinators in each participating school; increase extended learning opportunities before and after school; increase the use of technology; provide coaches to assist with instructional improvement; dedicate more

funding for assessments, analysis, and reporting at the building level; and increase staffing for the district's family resource center.

Implications: In addition to the implications identified in Option 1, the increased resources that would come with this option would provide more support to families, restore after school programs and minimize the need of students to be pulled out of the general education classroom for specialized instruction, and allow for more intensive instruction for all students who need Title 1 services.

Funding Assumption 3: The Quality Education Model is fully funded by the Oregon State Legislature.

Option 3: Adopt Option 2 and use non-Title 1 resources to support full day kindergartens, improve the Title 1 staffing ratio, provide after school and summer school programs, increase funding for homeless and delinquent youth, locate a family resource center at each eligible school and make other program improvements.

Implement Options 1 and 2, but add non-Title 1 resources to fund those full day kindergartens that currently use Title 1 resources; improve the Title 1 staffing ratio; provide summer school; increase funding for homeless and delinquent children and youth and their families; improve coordination with special education and ELL programs; increase support for students with behavior and social needs; fund after school programs (with transportation) in each Title school; increase professional development time; and locate a family resource center at each Title school.

Implications: In addition to the implications in Options 1 and 2, this would increase the number of students who have access to after school programs, provide increased academic services for homeless, neglected, and delinquent adolescents, and provide for even more intensive instruction for students who are not meeting the benchmarks.

What issues might stakeholder groups raise as they think about Title 1?

Staff: How to serve needy students in all schools.

Students: Transportation is needed to provide equal access to schools, programs, and services.

Parents: Some parents are underrepresented in district decisions, e.g., the disadvantaged, English Language Learners, homeless and mobile families, and those facing literacy challenges.

Community: Will the district provide equitable support to all schools?

English Language Learners

The English Language Learners Program is a state and federally funded program that requires participating school districts to provide supplemental English language

development to English language learners. In addition, it is the school district's responsibility to provide literacy development, and access to content area instruction within the general education program.

Current Program Model

There are four types of English Language Learners in 4J: those who are recent arrivals and are at grade level academically in their native language, those who are recent arrivals and who are not at grade level, those who are the sole speaker of a foreign language at their school, and those who have spent their entire lives in the United States, but who speak another language at home and struggle academically.

At the elementary level 4J provides a "pull-out program," some in-class support, and some services in extended day kindergartens. At the secondary level, the core program consists of content-based ELL 1 (beginning) and ELL 2 (intermediate) classes, some bilingual and sheltered-instruction courses, reading support through reading intervention programs, and study skills courses. Services at all levels are stretched thin, and not all eligible students are receiving all of these services. 4J has a Welcome Center for migrant and Latino ELL families in Lane County.

Implementation Options

The English Language Learners Focus Group based its implementation options on the following values and beliefs:

- Always value the child's culture and language.
- Staff development is key to academic success of ELL eligible students.
- One size does not fit all and a continuum of services is crucial.
- Parent and community partnerships are critical.

Funding Assumption 1: No additional funds will be available to the district.

Option 1: Maintain current ELL Services, restructure staff support of schools, and aggressively recruit general education staff that are qualified to teach students with limited English language proficiency.

Services for eligible ELL students would remain status quo with some restructuring of how current staffing is used to support the current programs. The district would aggressively recruit general education staff who have the English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) endorsement and/or who are bilingual.

Implications: While current resources are targeted to the highest need schools, there are not adequate resources to provide a full range of services, close the achievement gap, enable ELL students to meet state standards or have access to content curriculum, especially at the high school level, or to provide adequate staff development. Drop out rates are high. Because programs are spread throughout the district, scheduling is difficult and students who are in schools with a high concentration of ELL students are

more likely to get services (although not sufficient) than those in schools with a low concentration of ELL students. The current model creates an inequitable impact on the workload of some teachers. The district, however, would have more staff that have the background and training to work with ELL eligible students because of enhanced recruitment.

Funding Assumption 2: Some additional funds will be available to the district.

Option 2: Implement Option 1 and improve staff development and coordination of services, expand the Welcome Center and course offerings at the secondary level, establish a Newcomer program for grades 6 through 12, cluster south region ELL students, and support native language literacy.

Services and support to students would be improved by providing funding for staff development; improved staffing to coordinate ELL instruction and services to schools; expansion of the Welcome Center to support additional languages; expansion of appropriate course offerings at middle and high schools; establishing a Newcomer program for grades 6 through 12; clustering south region students from schools with low numbers of ELL eligible students; and supporting native language literacy through extended-year or school day programs or the development of a dual-language program.

Implications: While still not adequate, student access to appropriate instruction would improve and the district would be better able to meet the mandates required by the No Child Left Behind Act. While some students would have access to more choice with these improvements, clustering might limit school choice for others. There would be more assistance in helping students make transitions, and communication with parents would improve. There would be more likelihood that all staff would assume more responsibility for the instruction of limited English speakers, however, the ratio of ELL to non-ELL students would continue to be unbalanced across the district.

Funding Assumption 3: The Quality Education Model is fully funded by the Oregon State Legislature.

Option 3: Adopt Option 2 and further improve staff development, provide transportation for parents to attend an expanded Welcome Center, establish a Newcomer program at each high school, consider clustering of students in each region, establish a dual language program, and make other program improvements.

In addition to the improvements in Option 2, services and support would be enhanced with a district-wide staff development coordinator; more improvements in staffing to coordinate ELL instruction; and transportation for parents to the Welcome Center which would have adequate staffing and additional languages. A broader continuum of ELL classes would be established; there would be a Newcomer program in each regional high school for students in grades 6-12; clustering with transportation would be possible in each region; support of native language literacy would improve

by establishing a dual language program with transportation and planning time, and expanding the literacy development opportunities described in Option 2.

Implications: The academic and social needs of ELL eligible students would be met, families would have full access to information, more staff would accept responsibility for every student, dual language and Newcomer programs could draw families back to their neighborhood schools, staff would be more highly qualified, there would be a broader continuum of services and the achievement gap is more likely to be closed. On the other hand, clustering of services could limit school choice for ELL students and a Newcomer program could be seen as segregation.

What issues might stakeholder groups raise as they think about the English Language Learners Program?

Staff: Staff may be concerned that clustering ELL eligible students might cause less diversity in some schools, increase the workload of some teachers, and require teachers to be moved from one school to another.

Students: Will school choice be available to ELL eligible students? Will clustering and Newcomer programs lead to segregation? Will ELL students be able to meet graduation requirements? Will students be able to acculturate?

Parents: Parents may be concerned about clustering ELL students, transportation time, segregation, meeting graduation requirements, and assimilation vs. acculturation.

Community: Clustering may create a perception of a less desirable school, raise segregation issues, create pockets of elitism and poverty, and create less diverse schools.

Pre-Kindergarten and Full Day Kindergarten

The state requires school districts to offer half-day kindergarten programs for resident students and counts those students as half time when it allocates funds. Federal law requires the state and school districts to provide services for students with disabilities from birth. The state also provides partial funding of the federal Head Start program, which provides comprehensive services to low-income preschoolers.

Current Program Model

The district operates twenty elementary buildings that house 26 elementary schools (including alternative schools). All but three of the alternative schools have kindergarten programs. Nineteen schools have half-day (2.5 hours) programs and four have full-day programs (6.25 hours). Some schools have adjusted the schedule so that students in half-time programs have longer school days but attend school fewer days.

The district has no formal pre-kindergarten program, but each of the high schools has preschool programs to provide instruction in child development. The preschool programs at Churchill and the Opportunity Center are also designed to accommodate the children of high school students so they are able to attend school. There is a deaf and hard of hearing

preschool at Holt Elementary School and the district provides transportation for preschool students with disabilities to attend appropriate programs. There is a co-op preschool at Coburg, and some agencies rent space from the district for their preschool and day care programs. Head Start, an independent agency, operates a program at Howard and has a number of classrooms at Whiteaker School, which it recently purchased from the school district.

Implementation Options

The Pre-Kindergarten and Full Day Kindergarten focus group based its implementation options on the following values and beliefs:

- Investing resources and energy in young children results in the greatest return for the individual student and for society.
- Kindergarten and Pre-Kindergarten programs should provide opportunities for developing all facets of the child, including social, emotional, physical, cognitive, and aesthetic abilities.
- Creating a learning environment that is a supportive, safe, healthy, diverse, and respectful place for all students to learn is essential to success.
- Early parent involvement in their child's education is crucial to the child's short and long-term success.

Funding Assumption 1: No additional funds will be available to the district.

Option 1: Encourage full-day kindergarten for all students.

The district would encourage full-day kindergartens; work with the legislature to change the mandatory age of school attendance from the age of 7 to 5; add information about 4J to the current Welcome Baby packet; recruit more diverse staff; and require high school preschools to meet quality standards. The district would consider a modified or year-round calendar.

Implications: High school students would have a better community service option; learn parenting skills, and school attendance by parenting students would improve.

Funding Assumption 2: Some additional funds will be available to the district.

Option 2: Provide full-day kindergartens for all students.

The district would fund full-day kindergartens at all schools (including alternative schools) and staff it with a full-time teacher and a six-hour instructional assistant. The district would work collaboratively with other agencies, include parent education in the model, and further develop transition plans between preschools and kindergartens. This option also includes the items specified in Option 1.

Implications: In addition to the implications identified in Option 1, all children would have equal access to full day kindergarten programs and there would be less mobility between neighborhood and alternative schools and thus more enrollment stability. Better services could be provided to high-need students. Some Title 1 funds that are currently being used to fund a few full-day kindergartens could be reallocated. The number of bus routes would be reduced but some facilities would need to be upgraded.

Funding Assumption 3: The Quality Education Model is fully funded by the Oregon State Legislature.

Option 3: Provide full-day kindergartens and locate Oregon Pre-Kindergarten classes on elementary school campuses.

In addition to the components identified in Option 2, work cooperatively with Head Start and EC Cares to provide Oregon Pre-Kindergarten programs at local neighborhood schools. Oregon funds pre-kindergarten programs jointly with Head Start for income eligible students.

Implications: In addition to the implications identified in Option 2, all income eligible preschoolers would have access to an Oregon Pre-Kindergarten class.

What issues might stakeholder groups raise as they think about pre-kindergartens and full day kindergartens?

Staff: Under options 2 and 3, inequities in teaching assignments would be reduced.

Students: The current model does not reflect the changing demographics and skill set of the future work force.

Parents: If the district continues the current program, parents will continue to raise the issue of fairness.

Community: Some private schools and preschools may lose students.

High School Size

Current Program Model

There are four high schools in District 4J. North Eugene High School, which has an enrollment of 1,159 students, is divided into three small schools. Churchill (1,287 students) is a large comprehensive high school that offers small learning environments for its students. South Eugene (1,700 students) and Sheldon (1,642) are both large comprehensive high schools. Each high school campus has an International High School. Opportunity Center is an alternative high school (grades 10 through 12) for students who are not successful in a regular high school program and Churchill and North offer alternative programs for students who struggle in school.

Implementation Options

The High School Size Focus Group based its implementation options on the following values and beliefs:

- Our collective responsibility is to ensure quality and success for all high school aged students.
- Schools must evolve to meet the changing needs of students, community, and society.
- Educators and other adult stakeholders must develop and sustain professional learning communities.
- Students require academically rigorous and relevant learning experiences to ensure their success in post-secondary education, in chosen careers, and as actively participating citizens.
- Positive relationships among all members of a school community are crucial to student success. Adults must take responsibility to know, value, and care about all students.
- Smaller high schools which provide personalized learning environments, academically engage all students, empower educators, and connect youth and community will realize our vision of all students succeeding.

Funding Assumption 1: No additional funds will be available to the district.

Option 1: Limit enrollment at each high school to 1,450 students.

The district would limit enrollment at each high school to 1,450 students and schools would create smaller personalized learning environments, where they do not already exist.

Implications: This option balances enrollment and staffing and equalizes program support at each of the four high schools, but without additional funding, this option would not improve teaching or learning for all students. However, each high school could provide similar course offerings and elective programs, and conditions for teaching and learning in high schools would improve. Schools with personalized learning environments would more easily comply with and meet state and federal mandates.

Two high schools would lose staff and two would gain staff. School choice would be more limited and regional boundaries and the location of alternative schools would need to be reviewed, which would be complex. This would be controversial and the School Board and district administration would need to be committed to the change.

Funding Assumption 2: Some additional funds will be available to the district.

Note: The focus group identified two options within Funding Assumption 2.

Option 2: Establish some stand-alone small schools of from 400 to 800 students.

The district would establish several theme based stand-alone schools of from 400 to 800 students each. They could be based on current models (e.g., Industry, Design, Engineering and Science (IDEAS), Academy of the Arts, or a full day International High School) or new ones could be created.

Implications: The theme based schools would be more engaging for some students, students would have more choices and more opportunities for engaging in leadership roles, and conditions for teaching and learning would improve. School choice would need to be managed, enrollments at other district high schools could decline, and the district would need to provide program staffing to achieve equity. High school facilities would be used differently, new high school facilities may need to be developed, and the location of new schools could have an impact on regional enrollment. This would be controversial and the School Board and district administration would need to be committed to the change.

Option 3: Establish a district-wide career academy at each high school for grades 11 and 12, and a new career institute for grades 11 and 12.

Each high school would establish a career academy program in such areas as culinary arts, broadcasting, engineering, environmental students or health occupations. Students could attend their regular high school program part time and the career academy part time. They could attend an academy either at their own neighborhood high school or on one of the other high school campuses. The district would also establish a new Career Institute perhaps modeled on the Sabin Career Institute in Portland that allows students to attend their neighborhood high school while also attending the Career Institute part of the day.

Implications: Students would have more choice of learning experiences, be supported in meeting new career-related graduation requirements in ways that are relevant to them, receive career and job skills training, have more opportunity for leadership, and receive more personalized attention.

Enrollments at each high school would remain stable but high schools would need to coordinate their daily schedules and there would likely be changes in staff assignments. There would be good opportunity for collaboration with the business community. Effective implementation would require shifts in staff attitudes and assignments.

High school facilities would be used differently and a new high school (for the Career Institute) may need to be built. The School Board and district administration would need to be committed to the change.

Funding Assumption 3: The Quality Education Model is fully funded by the Oregon State Legislature.

Option 4: Limit enrollment at each high school to 800 students.

The high schools would be staffed and funded at the QEM level.

Implications: Present high school facilities would be used differently and at least two new high schools would be created, possibly at new locations. Conditions for teaching and learning in high schools would more likely improve, given the possibilities for more integrated curriculum, more project based learning, smaller class size and more personalization, and overall more rigor. School choice would need to be managed and programs for students with special needs would be impacted. The middle school feeder system would have to change. Effective implementation would require shifts in staff attitudes and assignments. The School Board and district administration would need to be committed to the change.

Elementary and Middle School Size

Current Program Model

Counting alternative schools, there are 26 elementary schools that are located in 20 buildings. Their enrollment ranges from a low of 97 students at Magnet Arts Alternative School to a high of 515 at Gilham Elementary School. There are eight middle schools whose enrollment ranges from 219 students at Jefferson to 672 students at Roosevelt. Because of low enrollments Jefferson and Magnet Arts (which are located in the same building), will reorganize into a single K-8 program, beginning in the fall of 2007.

Implementation Options

The Elementary and Middle School Size Focus Group based its implementation options on the following values and beliefs:

- All students have the right to an opportunity to succeed in a safe and productive environment.
- All stakeholders have a sense of belonging, and there is collaboration and teamwork among and between students, staff, families, and community.
- There is rigor and quality in all subject areas with qualified staff.
- All students in all buildings need access to a continuum of services and informed instruction that provides and fosters individual achievement.
- There are fundamental needs that contribute to school success regardless of school size: shared vision, competent accountable leadership, investment by stakeholders, fidelity of implementation, and sustained support for implementation.
- Informed direction from school leadership and adequate support from district resources are integral components in creating a positive climate for change.

(NOTE: The elementary and middle school size focus group identified three school size levels and discussed their implications in the context of whether additional funds would or would not be available.)

Funding Assumption 1: No additional funds will be available to the district.

General

Implications: Given no additional funds, the larger the school, the easier it is have flexibility, provide program staffing, and meet the differing needs of schools and their students. Staffing for supplementary programs will continue to vary because funding is allocated on a per pupil basis.

Option 1: Operate smaller schools with no additional funds.

- Elementary Level @ 250 students.
- Middle Level @ 350 students.
- Middle Level @ 250 students (co-located with another school).
- K-8 Level @ 350 students.

Implications: Comprehensive offerings are limited and there is little or no supplementary staffing, and therefore little flexibility to provide program staffing. Open enrollment has a great impact on a smaller schools' ability to accommodate special needs and TAG students. There is little opportunity for a diverse school population. On the other hand, smaller schools may be more attractive to students and parents, and there is a better chance to develop a strong school climate.

Option 2: Operate schools at the enrollment levels suggested by the Quality Education Model but with no additional funds.

- Elementary Level @ 350 students.
- Middle Level @ 500 students.
- K-8 level @ 500 students.

Implications: Given the larger size, there is increased flexibility in school configuration, ability to hire part time supplemental staff, and increased opportunity for a more diverse school population.

Option 3: Operate larger schools with no additional funds.

- Elementary Level @ 500 students.
- Middle Level @ 650 students.
- K-8 Level @ 650 students.

Implications: There is even greater flexibility for school configuration, supplemental staff would approach full time, and there is much more potential for having a diverse school population. There is more opportunity for collaboration and brainstorming among staff, but school-wide culture becomes increasingly difficult to foster or develop. The larger attendance areas created by larger schools may reduce the number of schools the district needs to maintain, but require more transportation.

Funding Assumption 2: Some additional funds will be available to the district.

General

Implications: Increased funding provides better opportunities for all students to succeed, additional staff for specialty areas, and additional opportunities for extending learning time for targeted students, and better professional development opportunities. It eases the impact of open enrollment. Increased funding makes smaller schools much more viable.

Option 4: Operate smaller schools with additional funds.

Option 5: Operate schools at the enrollment levels suggested by the Quality Education Model but with additional funds.

Option 6: Operate larger schools with additional funds.

What issues might stakeholder groups raise as they think about elementary and middle school size?

Staff: How will school size affect the student-to-teacher ratio, the new licensure requirements, FTE for general vs. specialist staffing, the composition of the staff, school identity, and special education and services to high need students? How will school size affect school identity and how will school size be affected by various grade configurations? Will staff be supported, criticized for inadequate skills, forced to locate to other schools, and/or compensated for the time necessary to implement changes?

Students: Will students be required to change schools during a reconfiguration? How will their programs, choices, and grade configurations change, and will they be accepted and welcomed regardless of their need for support and/or services?

Parents: How will the change in school size affect transportation, the neighborhood school, services to children, and student safety? What impact will there be on school choice and will there be more opportunities for TAG students? Will changes in school size have a financial impact on families?

Community: Will changes in school size have a financial impact on the community, what affect will it have on alternative schools, what impact will it have on community identity, will boundary changes affect property values, and how will changes be implemented over time? How will equity issues be addressed and are there resources to support the needs of minority students at all schools? What is the implementation timeline?

Technology

Current Program Model

District 4J has an extensive technology system that supports both instruction and operations in schools and the Education Center. Every classroom in 4J is connected to the Internet via

fiber, T1, or a wireless network. The district supports a wide-range of equipment, software, and professional development. The Oregon Department of Education requires technology enhanced student assessment (TESA) of 4J students. The district employs three FTE district-wide support positions to service the instructional needs of all 40 school programs. The district does not provide schools with dedicated IT staffing, but a number of schools use their own resources to hire technology staff. There is a District Technology Plan (2005-2008) that is underway to improve both the academic and operational use of technology in the school district.

Implementation Options

The Technology Focus Group based its implementation options on the following values and beliefs:

- Technology is key to the instructional and operation needs of the district.
- All students and staff must have equal access to technology.
- Comprehensive and ongoing professional development opportunities should be provided for all staff.
- The technology infrastructure must have sufficient capacity and reliability to support the teaching and learning and operations of the district.
- Technical support must meet the needs of all users.

Funding Assumption 1: No additional funds will be available to the district.

Option 1: Reallocate classified staffing to hire regional technology support specialists, centralize hardware and software purchasing, and improve staff development.

Hire four full-time classified technology support specialists, one per region by reallocating general education classified hours before they are distributed to the schools. Centralize hardware and software purchasing to enhance purchasing negotiations. Dedicate one district staff development day to technology.

Implications: Each school would have baseline access to hardware and software support and all staff would participate in professional development but it would minimally reduce general education classified FTE that is assigned to schools and require negotiating the use of existing staff development days with other programs.

Funding Assumption 2: Some additional funds will be available to the district.

Option 2: Implement Option 1 and hire regional instructional technology coaches, subscribe to online professional development, and articulate the district's technology scope and sequence.

In addition to the reallocations in Option 1, hire four certified Instructional Technology Coaches, one per region, subscribe to online professional

development using tutorials, and continue developing an articulated K-12 technology scope and sequence.

Implications: All staff would have access to technology coaches, instructional support, and on-line professional development. This would begin to equalize efforts between schools, enhance differentiated instruction, begin to address the Oregon Educational Technology Plan, and establish single regional contacts that understand the instructional needs of schools and the region.

Funding Assumption 3: The Quality Education Model is fully funded by the Oregon State Legislature.

Option 3: Implement Option 2 and hire additional classified technology support specialists, one professional staff member to implement online tutorials, and a district webmaster.

In addition to the reallocations and improvements in Options 1 and 2, hire four additional classified technology support specialists, designating one, for a total of two, per region, one professional staff member to implement on line tutorials, one webmaster to maintain the district's website, and provide support to these staff members.

Implications: In addition to the implications identified in Options 1 and 2, there would be greater access to training and professional development, significant support of instructional computing, and improved ability to address the goals of the Oregon Technology Plan.

Funding Assumption 4: The district establishes a technology initiative.

Option 4: Undertake a comprehensive technology initiative.

The district would undertake a \$17 million initiative to fully fund the technology needs of the school district, which would provide a comprehensive program of technology support, software, professional development, technical infrastructure, and school based instructional hardware. The district currently spends approximately \$5 million in general funds.

What issues might stakeholder groups raise as they think about technology?

Staff: There are varied levels of understanding, practice, and comfort around instructional technology.

Students: Students may express concerns regarding Internet censorship and students in secondary schools are aware of the lack of technology integration into the curriculum as compared to their experiences while in elementary school.

Parents: Parents have Internet safety concerns and want computers to be used for instruction, not games. Parents have varying concerns about Internet censorship.

Community: The community is not aware that funds from bond measures cannot, by state rule, be used for computer purchases. Some community members are concerned about the lack of technology in schools and would like to have input regarding how it is used.

Grade Configuration

Current Program Model

The district currently has 20 neighborhood K-5 elementary schools, three language immersion schools, and five other alternative elementary schools that are either grades K through 5 or grades 1 through 5. Eight middle schools serve grades 6 through 8 and four high schools, grades 9 through 12.

Implementation Options

The Grade Configuration focus group based its implementation options on the following values and beliefs:

Grade configurations should:

- Ensure that transitions to new schools are positive for all students and families and be structured to support and promote students' social and emotional growth.
- Be designed to promote curriculum articulation and alignment to ensure academic success.
- Consider developmental needs as well as multi-aged opportunities and benefits and pay attention to multi-aged groupings so that role modeling and mentoring occur.
- Keep school size small, or structure schools, to create small communities that foster relationships.
- Provide opportunities and resources to ensure that every student is a competent reader.

(NOTE: The grade configuration focus group identified three grade re-configurations and discussed their implications in the context of whether additional funds would or would not be available.)

Funding Assumption 1: No additional funds will be available to the district.

Option 1: Phase in (Pre) K-8 grade configurations district-wide and maintain 9-12 high schools.

Implications: This grade configuration will minimize transitions and provide multi-aged opportunities and benefits. K-8 models have been found to produce higher achievement across all grade levels and reduce drug use and inappropriate sexual activity among middle school aged children. Larger sized K-8 schools could have increased course offerings, provide stability for students, and facilitate programming for students with special needs. A K-8 model could increase efficiency by reducing transportation, reducing the

number of schools and having fewer itinerant teachers. It could assist the district in dealing with declining enrollment. Adjustments would need to be made to how Title 1 funds are distributed, licensure for teachers could be a challenge, and there may be a sense of loss of tradition with the elimination of elementary schools. There would be significant one-time costs for start up.

Option 2: Phase in Primary (K-3) and Intermediate (4-8) and High Schools (9-12).

This model implies that K-3 schools would be housed in stand-alone buildings with their own boundaries and transportation. An intermediate school would also be a stand-alone building with its own boundaries and transportation.

Implications: This grade configuration could lead to increased parent involvement at the intermediate level, Title 1 support could be targeted or allocated to K-3 students in the primary setting in order to emphasize early literacy and ELL students could be clustered to increase efficiency of service. Intermediate schools could offer electives earlier in grades 4 and 5 to enrich learning experiences and expand opportunities such as clubs, orchestra, student government and advanced course offerings. This model allows greater primary school focus on literacy to eliminate the achievement gap by grade 3.

The primary schools would lose older student mentors and models, the change in configuration may reduce communication and articulation between grades 3 and 4, and primary schools would have a shorter time to develop relationships with students and families. Intermediate schools, however, would have more years to develop relationships with families and there would be increased communication and curriculum articulation and alignment in grades 4 through 8 to improve student achievement.

It will be necessary to discuss how this grade configuration would affect alternative schools and the effect of school choice on the ability of neighborhood schools to stabilize their enrollments.

The district may need to provide additional staffing at the intermediate schools for specialists, “highly qualified” staff requirements may limit flexibility of staffing and subsequently course offerings in grades 6 through 8. This option may increase transportation needs.

There could be a significant impact on facilities: there would need to be new playground equipment at the intermediate schools; primary schools could be located in existing elementary schools, but classroom space at existing middle schools may be insufficient for the 4-8 intermediate schools; and the district may choose to close some buildings and add to others to accommodate changes in enrollment. The district may also convert existing elementary schools to intermediate schools.

Transportation funds could be reallocated for extended opportunities for summer school and after school programs.

Option 3: Maintain the current grade configuration (K-5, 6-8, 9-12).

Implications: Schools would continue to make site decisions to determine service level in Physical Education, music, library, technology and counseling, based on their varying resources and local interests. There continue to be inequities between new and old buildings (e.g., HVAC and technology). School choice would continue to create inequities in student enrollment in neighborhood schools and regionally.

Maintaining the current K-5 model offers a large range of ages for modeling and mentoring, and there is time to develop parent/school partnerships. Three years at the current middle school level is a short time in which to build relationships with families and students and transition from the 5th to 6th grade is sometimes difficult.

Funding Assumption 2: Some additional funds will be available to the district.

Option 4: Phase in (Pre) K-8 grade configurations district-wide and maintain 9-12 high schools.

Implications: Same as in Option 1, but additional funding would allow for increased course offerings, facilitate the opportunity for schools to create completely new identities, and provide the opportunity to meet the needs of a broader range of students.

Option 5: Phase in Primary (K-3) and Intermediate (4-8) and High Schools (9-12).

This model implies that K-3 schools would be housed in stand-alone buildings with their own boundaries and transportation. An intermediate school would also be a stand-alone building with it's own boundaries and transportation.

Implications: Same as in Options 2 and 4.

Option 6: Maintain the current grade configuration (K-5, 6-8, 9-12).

Implications: Same as in Options 3 and 4, but additional funding will increase staffing for some neighborhood schools and therefore more stability.

Funding Assumption 3: The Quality Education Model is fully funded by the Oregon State Legislature.

Option 7: Phase in (Pre) K-8 grade configurations district-wide and maintain 9-12 high schools.

Implications: Same as in Option 1, but funding at the QEM level would increase academic opportunities and specialists for music, reading, physical

education, math, TAG, media, world languages, art and full day kindergartens. It would positively balance what all schools are able to offer. Additional funding allows a continued focus on closing the achievement gap.

Option 8: Phase in Primary (K-3) and Intermediate (4-8) and High Schools (9-12).

Implications: Same as in Options 2 and 7.

Option 9: Maintain the current grade configuration (K-5, 6-8, 9-12).

Implications: All students would have access to physical education, music, library, technology and counseling and there would be a full range of course offerings at the middle school level. All elementary schools could have full time kindergartens. Class size at all schools could be reduced. Inequities between schools would be alleviated.

What issues might stakeholder groups raise as they think about grade configuration?

Staff: Why is the district reconfiguring and is there research to support it? When and how will the changes occur and will it affect job security or assignment? How is the district going to support teachers with the “highly qualified” teacher requirements? Will staff have input and extra time or compensation for moving? Who makes decisions about where staff is assigned?

Students: How will grade configuration affect students? Will desired courses be available and what will happen to athletic teams? What will it be like with additional older or younger children in a school?

Parents: Why is the district making the change and will parents have input? Who makes the final decision? Will school choice still be available to families? Will children be safe, is the curriculum and instruction rigorous, and will there be adequate transition activities?

Community: Why is the district making the change and is it a good use of tax dollars? Will there be a loss of school identity and tradition?

Questions and Issues Being Forwarded to the School Board and the Think Tank

Each of the focus groups had several issues and questions that it believes the district needs to focus on as it completes its strategic planning process. They are listed below.

Special Education

1. An integrated and collaborative process is necessary in order to make a shift so that all 4J staff is responsible for all 4J students. This will require collaboration and staffing schools based on student needs, not student counts. The timeline for combining general and special education needs to be flexible so that schools do a

good job, not meet a predetermined deadline. What timeline will the district require to bring general education and special education into one department and allocate resources based on need?

2. The instructional and social needs of each child should drive instructional practices.
3. There must be high standards for all students: access, participation, and progress for all students in general education classes must be a priority. Both general education and special education teachers will need support from the Special Education department.
4. How can the district assure a good climate as it moves to quickly implement changes while recognizing that change takes time and staff and parent buy-in?
5. Ongoing professional development is essential for the successful integration of general and special education based on the 80% standard.
6. How does the district keep workload reasonable so it does not burn out teachers, especially special educators, and is able to attract and hire quality new staff?
7. Would a change to year-round schools allow for more professional development and give more continuity to student instruction?
8. Please consider the needs of the growing population of students on the autism spectrum.
9. A comprehensive core curriculum is required to ensure access to grade-level instruction in the least restrictive environment.
10. How can the district communicate to the Oregon Department of Education that 4J should receive increased funding to meet the needs of a greater number of high intensity students than is typically the case?
11. How does the district balance the need of schools and staff as they use their creativity to individualize their programs and schools with the need to follow district parameters so that students can move anywhere in the district and receive a seamless education?
12. How does the district support early intervention without reducing support for the upper grades?
13. How can the district integrate the services provided by differently funded programs, e.g., general education, special education, Title 1, English Language Learners, and other grants?
14. Can the district offer incentives to those who are willing to pioneer this model?

Title 1

1. What additional funds are available to provide adequate funding for public schools so that they can provide quality education for all students?

2. Will the school board and community build on the work of the Access and Options Committee, implement the recommendations, and continue to work for equity in education for all district students?
3. Can schools be reconfigured to support equity? For example:
 - Reduce the intensity of services in Title 1 schools by relocating Regional Special Education Programs to other schools;
 - Decrease the concentration of high poverty in Title 1 schools by consolidating schools, providing transportation, and considering student populations in residential community facilities (e.g., Buckley House, the Mission, and First Place);
 - Create a dual immersion program and provide transportation and Title 1 to ensure quality learning for English Language Learners as well as enriching language opportunities for all students; and
 - Pilot year round schools in some Title 1 schools.
4. How will the school board ensure that all constituent groups, including Title 1 families, are included in district problem solving and solution-making?

English Language Learners

1. What can be done to make access to information in native languages more available?
2. Budgets for programs like ELL, Title 1, and Special Education are too compartmentalized. Can we pool monies and consider student needs?
3. How can the district encourage and support teachers to use differentiated instruction and make personal connections with students?
4. What can the district do to ensure that teacher-training programs adequately prepare teachers to work with a diverse student population?
5. Given site-based decision making, will the district support a comprehensive district-wide ELL program?
6. How will the district provide sustained programs and staffing for ELL?
7. How will the district decide where to locate various district programs?
8. How will the district minimize the inequities caused by open enrollment?
9. Students and/or parents can opt out of the ELL programs that are recommended for them. How can these groups be educated to understand the need for services?
10. As the ELL population grows, will clustering be the most effective program and how will clustering ELL students affect neighborhood schools that are competing with alternative schools?

Pre-Kindergarten and Full Day Kindergarten

1. Given current brain research that indicates most significant brain development occurs before first grade, can we truly afford not to have full day kindergartens?
2. If the district supports the recommendations in the Access and Options report, can it continue to have such a high degree of variation of programming among schools?
3. How should district funds be reallocated so that all schools have full day kindergartens?

High School Size

1. The current system for choosing alternative schools in the district has led to elitism, competition, stereotyping, unintended tracking, special education student barriers, and inequities of access for the poor and disadvantaged. The district needs to take responsibility for addressing this situation and changing it in a way that is positive and fair.
2. What action will the school district take to address the inequity of two high schools being affluent and growing while two other high schools are less affluent and declining in enrollment?
3. What will district leaders be willing and able to do to effectively manage change and implement and sustain options related to high school size?
4. To what degree and in what way is the district's leadership willing to allocate resources, including program staffing, to schools so that all students' needs are met?
5. How would services for special need students and the health centers be affected by changes in high school size?
6. How will the district maintain articulation of curriculum between the middle level and high school level as high school reform takes place?
7. If there are changes in grade configurations at other instructional levels, how will they affect high schools?
8. How will student opinion and ideas be included in the strategic planning process?

Elementary and Middle School Size

1. Open enrollment is a given in the 4J culture, yet in some ways it is in conflict with providing successful educational services to all students due to inequitable pooling of populations. How can the district control school size and ameliorate the negative effects of choice?
2. Before considering the use of bussing to enable more access to school choice, should the district study what other school districts are doing?

3. What support is needed so all schools and staff can successfully help students achieve at high levels?
4. What does research say about whether a small elementary school of 250 with additional resources is better than the 300 to 400 students proposed by the Quality Education Model?
5. If the size of schools is modified, what impact will it have on the number of home school and private school students? Will some come back? Will more leave?
6. What implications does school size have for special programs and special populations?
7. How does school size affect alternative and language immersion programs?
8. What is an appropriate transition time to phase in proposed changes?
9. Does the district have the facilities necessary to support changes in school size?
10. If changes are made in school size, can they be supported financially over time?
11. Can the QEM school size proposals or the small school size proposal support a community or neighborhood school model?
12. What size school will provide the safest and most productive environment for all students and foster safe and open collaboration among staff?
13. At what school size, will students have the right and opportunity to succeed in a rigorous program with highly qualified staff.
14. Should the district consider boundary changes to accommodate school size, or configure schools to accommodate existing boundaries? How would boundary changes affect transportation?
15. Will small schools lead to segregation or more openness?
16. Who will determine school size: the Board, the administration, the region, or the school?
17. Are the district's alternative schools more attractive to parents because the school size is smaller? Are these small school sizes for alternative schools the most appropriate?

Technology

1. Site-based decision-making compromises equity. If the district wants to address the issue of equity and equal access for all students and staff, it needs to change how it makes decisions about technology staffing and purchasing.
2. The focus group based its recommendations with the assumption that there would be a systematic shift in district goals related to technology: These would include the significant funding increases necessary to supply and support technology systems;

adequate infrastructure staffing to maintain these systems, and, district-wide mandates which would establish technology goals embedded into an articulated K-12

Grade Configuration

1. Do current grade configurations afford equal opportunities for all students and how will possible re-configurations be an improvement?
2. Given the current Access and Options recommendations, how will grade reconfigurations work with alternative schools?
3. Is it better to do pilot programs or phase in the whole district, one school or one region at a time?
4. How will school configurations affect current school boundaries and can boundaries be changed to achieve SES equalization?
5. Given open enrollment, can the district plan effectively for any of these models?
6. How will transportation be affected by new grade configurations?
7. Would regulating school choice provide for more equitable schools?

Conclusion and General Themes

The first step of District 4J's strategic planning process (Shaping 4J's Future) is nearing completion and the information and ideas identified by district staff as it researched demographic and enrollment trends, analyzed building capacity, and identified options for potential program modification, now moves on to the School Board and the Think Tank.

It is clear that enrollment is declining, student and community demographics are changing and that future funding decisions, both operational and capital, must be based on a clear set of program decisions, whether they be to maintain the status quo or to do major reconfigurations of the instructional programs and schools. Whatever decisions are made, they must be designed to ensure that the achievement of all students is enhanced and that staff is well prepared and empowered to provide the very best instruction possible.

The eight focus groups that were convened in November have identified 32 options for consideration by the Think Tank as it develops possibilities for the future. The focus group members move their ideas forward knowing that they will not all be adopted, but with the belief that they will be sincerely considered and fully discussed.

General Themes

While the focus groups did not, and it was not a part of their charge, integrate their options there were a number of themes that developed during the focus group process. The School Board and the Think Tank will want to pay special attention to them.

1. Equity of Staffing: Given the range in size of schools, the concentration of high-need students, and how resources are allocated, the district needs to ensure that staffing allocations are made in such a way that all schools have the same capability of providing services.
2. Smaller Learning Environments: Students learn best in smaller and more personalized learning environments. This is supported by research. However, without sufficient resources smaller schools have reduced flexibility and cannot provide programs that are equal to those provided by larger schools.
3. School Choice and Open Enrollment: School choice is a part of 4J's culture, but it has created inequities. Certain neighborhood schools have fewer engaged parents, higher concentration of students with needs, have artificially become low-income schools, and are not able to predict enrollment patterns in the way that most alternative schools or schools in more affluent neighborhoods can.
4. Coordination of Programs for Students with Special Needs: There is a need to better coordinate how services for students with special needs are delivered. The Special Education, Title 1, and English Language Learner programs can do a better job of working together and sharing resources (with the understanding that each of those programs has specific external guidelines about how their funds can be used).
5. Concentration of High-Need Students: For a number of reasons some schools have a higher concentration of high-need students which puts a great deal of pressure on those schools. Some is caused by neighborhood demographics and some by the

“artificial” placement of regional learning centers in those schools. This sometimes has a negative impact on the ability of the schools to retain families.

6. Workload: District staff has a major interest in both workload and workload equity. A higher concentration of special needs students, the size of a school, and increasing demands all have a significant impact on workload of staff and create inequities.
7. Ensuring Diversity: As decisions are made about the nature of the school district’s program, school choice, size of schools, and school boundaries, attention should be given to the desire of staff to have a culturally, ethnically, and academically diverse school population.
8. Instruction: All students should have a rigorous academic program, participate in the general education program, and receive support to do so if they are challenged. There must be an integrated district-wide curriculum. The staff and program should be accountable for meeting local, state, and federal standards.
9. Transition: All decisions about grade and program configuration should be made to enable students to transition between grade levels and programs.
10. Site Based Decision Making: The district must be clear about what schools are required to do and when they have autonomy. When it is vague, some programs have difficulty operating in schools and the district cannot ensure that its goals are being met.
11. Commitment to Change: Unless the board and district administration are committed to a specific change and can insure that the change can be sustained, they should move with caution.
12. Involvement in Decision Making: The district should be careful to include students and a full range of parents in decision making, not just those who are likely to attend meetings voluntarily.

Attachments

Focus Group Reports:

Special Education
Title I
English Language Learners
Pre-Kindergarten and Full Day Kindergarten
High School Size
Elementary and Middle School Size
Technology
Grade Configuration